POCAHONTAS COUNTY

HISTORY OF KNAPPS CREEK COMMUNITY

(Written by Enid Harper)

In the eastern part of Pocahontas County, West Virginia, is Knapps Creek which has its source in the Alleghany Mountains about five miles above Frost. Its two branches unite at Frost from which place it continues to flow along the base of the mountains to the place where it empties into the Greenbrier River, at Marlinton, a distance of almost twenty miles from Frost. The East Fork of the Creek is fed by a stream which comes forth out of the rugged mountain side near Paddys Knob, a peak with an elevation of 4450 feet.

One of the principal tributaries of Knapps Creek of the Minnehaha neighborhood which carries with it the waters of Cochrans Creek. At Huntersville Knapps Creek receives two other streams, Browns Creek from one side and Cummings Creek from the other.

Along the valley are numerous limestone springs, the waters of which are cold, an indication of purity. These help to make the creek larger. The first of them is a bold spring gushing out from under a hill near the fine home of S. Gibson. Further down the valley we find the stream called Mill Run near I. B. Moore's which receives water from a number of springs within a half mile. Next is the Mill Run at D. M. Dever's flowing through his farm where fine cattle graze. From here we go on to W. G. Beckman's where there is another stream of about equal volume. The source of it is also a magnificent never failing stream.

Last but no least is the famous Minnehaha Spring on the Lockbridge property. The crystal water of this spring is of a healing and medical nature. It has been shipped to various parts of the country.

Origin of Names - "The Hills is the hilly region in the northwest of the valley. These are very productive lands and are excellent for fruit and grazing. They were at one time heavily timbered but now only small tracts remain uncut.

The creek from which our good community takes its name was known as Ewings Creek in the earliest land papers but was soon changed to Knapps Creek in honor of a man by the name of Knapp who came into the Valley from Virginia prior to 1749.

the report of this country probably led Martin and Sewell to make explorations in the Greenbrier Valley. At first the name of the creek was spelled K-A-P-S, later it was changed to KNAPPS.

While here Knapp lived in a cabin on the west side of the creek about opposite the place where Mrs. P. L. Cleek now lives. It is not definitely known what became of him.

Indians. There are evidences that the Indians once roamed through the thick forrests which covered what is now our beautiful section of country. Pieces of flint have been found by our citizens which were no doubt used by the Red Race. There was an Indian burial ground on a flat above the road a short distance up the valley from I. B. Moore's dwelling. Indications were to the older people that several Indians had been buried here. It has been said that a few relics were found in later years when some excavations were made.

Early settlers. Michael Dougherty, a native of Ireland, settled in our valley near where W. G. Ruckman lives about the year 1770. He was one of the first to occupy the Knapps Creek Region. The same year Moses Moore of Virginia came to Knapps Creek. It is interesting to note that he bought the land extending from J. L. Herold's to D. W. Dever's for the consideration of two steel bear traps and two pounds of English sterling. One of the traps is in the possession of I. B. Moore at this writing. The original cabin of Moses Moore was built on land now owned by Mrs. Myrta Moore.

Mr. Moore was fond of hunting and would frequently spend several days in the region of the upper Greenbrier searching for game. One Sunday morning while sitting at his camp reading the Bible he was surrounded and captured by five or six Indians who compelled him to march to Ohio with them but through his cunningness he managed to escape and return to what is now Pocahontas County.

It is believed that the pioneer, Felix Grimes and his wife selected a site for a home in the hills near the Mt. Zion Church at a date preceeding 1800.

Old records show that John Sharp, Sr., Christopher Herold, Henry Harper, and John Dilley settled in our community between the years of 1800 and 1825 inclusive. We

...ould also mention that Lanty Lockridge and Michael Clock came to the Valley early in the nineteenth century.

It was a task for the pioneers to clear the forest and build their homes with the poor equipment they had. They worked with a shop made poll axe. In places the thickets of white thorn and wild crab was almost impenetrable. When a primitive forest of white pine, sugar maple, and other trees of large size was cut, a log-rolling was soon in order and they were burned. Bears and wolves were numerous and sheep had to be penned near by the house to protect them.

Land. Many of these hardy pioneers were granted land by James Monroe, John Tyler, and other governors of Virginia between the years of 1800 and 1825. Some of them made difficult trips to Richmond in order that the title of the land where they settled might be made good. The value of the land was small in comparison with the cost per acre now. Old land grants show that one conveyance of land was made as late as 1857 at a little more than one cent per acre. This was a tract of timber land containing 11,000 acres in the Alleghany mountains which extend over to Back Creek. The sum paid for it only sixty-seven years ago (1790) was $150.00. Since that time it has been sold and resold and millions of feet of valuable timber has been cut on it.

Making of a Rifle - At one time a man by the name of Evick lived in what is known as the Evick Hollow near Grover Moore's. He manufactures the Evick Rifle which was a famous gun in its day. We are told that one of these guns may be seen at the Pocahontas Times office. There may be some other hollows along the mountain that received names from men who were not permanent settlers.

Timber and saw mills. A fine lot of white pine timber stood along the foot of the Alleghany. Nearly all the good trees that grew on the level were destroyed because the settlers needed improved land more than timber. A number of sugar groves were left for the purpose of making maple sugar and syrup. The mountain timber has been going on the market since 1880. The white pine was cut first. The logs were peeled and floated down Knapps Creek and the Greenbrier River to Ronceverte where they were manufactured by the St. Lawrence Manufacturing Company.

Capt. A. E. Smith and James Whiting, who did business under the firm name of

Koch and Whiting, had ten million feet of white pine out each year for a period of six or seven years.

At that time hardwood seemed to be of little value. During the past fifteen or twenty years it has been cut rapidly, perhaps as much as one hundred and fifty to two hundred million feet have been taken from Knapps Creek and Douthards Creek and some valuable tracts are still standing.

The first saw mills to dot this section were the up and down mills run by water power. If we are rightly informed, there were three of these; one owned and operated by Moore's at a point about opposite Moore Schoolhouse, one was on the Lockridge farm where Douthards creek unites with Knapps Creek, and the third mill was built by Henry Harper and operated by him and his son Samuel, for a number of years. This last mill continued sawing until about 1890 and was the last mill of its kind to be operated in the community. Sometimes during the eighties P. M. Harper sawed lumber on this mill to build his house where Mrs. E. A. Pritchard now lives.

The first circular saw mill in this neighborhood was brought here from Augusta county, Virginia, for Wise Herold and I. B. Moore. Many people visited the new mill to observe its working.

Grist mill. The first mill to grind grain was the one owned by Michael Dougherty on the Mill Run where he settled. Peter Lightner, who was a well known citizen here in 1888, had a mill on the run at D. W. Dever's. Joseph Sharp, a pioneer of Frost, had a mill constructed close where A. A. Sharp now resides, one-half mile from the village.

Henry Harper also had a grist mill which ground wheat, corn and buckwheat. It was located on the farm owned by Harmon Shinoberry. In connection with the grist mill Mr. Harper had a saw mill which has already been mentioned, a tan-yard, and one of the old fashioned tilthammer blacksmith shops. The tilthammer was run by water-power. The mill for grinding grain crushed the kernels between two large revolving stones which were brought from Rockbridge county, Virginia. It was not used longer than 1896.

The Civil War. No battles of the Civil War were fought on the territory embraced within the Knapps Creek Community but brave men who have lived here were in service.

were valiant soldiers of the Federal Army while others joined the ranks of the Confederacy. Squads of Yankees frequently passed through this section and General Averill, a Union Commander, with his army, camped one night at Frost, marching on the next day to Huntersville.

Establishment of Post Offices - A post office was established at the village of Frost in 1853. Francis Dever was the first postmaster. In conversing with the oldest person in the community, Mrs. Ellen Buzzard, who was ninety-nine years of age on June 23, 1924, she says she does not remember how the name originated, but the presumption is that the name Frost was given to the office on account of the high altitude.

Early storekeepers were Frances Dever, Stuart Wade, Samuel Gibson, and J. B. Hannah.

Before "Uncle Sam" favored the people with a rural free delivery route there was a post office on Knapps Creek near the Mt. Carmel and Westminster Churches known as Sunset. Someone suggested this name because there was an office directly east of here in Batch County, Virginia, by the name of Sunrise. When mail was first carried to the early established offices it was only brought on Wednesdays and Saturdays. One of the early mail routes was from Huntersville to Mill Gap in Virginia.

Roads. The people were very much handicapped in their efforts to travel. Like Daniel Boone when he went to Kentucky they had to make the roads when they came to the country. The first known road leading from what is now Virginia into the Knapps Creek Valley came across the Alleghany Mountains just opposite the old Harper Mill. We find from the old land grants made by governors of Virginia, where corners were called for on this road which was then as Knapp's Spur, or the Spur Road. This name was likely given it because it was the road traveled by Mr. Knapp who will always be honored by the valley that has been named for him.

While the road is now only a pathway and but little traveled in this age of automobiles it shows evidence of having been dug or graded in a few places where it leads up a ridge on each side of the mountain. For years the people of Back Creek

[illegible] it in coming horseback to the Farrers Mill in bringing their grain to be ground.

The first wagon brought to Pocahontas county was brought over Knapp's Spur Road and was taken up the hollow where Westminster Church now stands and which was known as the Ervine Hollow at that time, and on to Cloverlick where it was used.

As the valley improved the fields fenced the road was kept on the Alleghany side the greater part of the way. On account of the shade and ice there in winter parts of it were changed from time to time until the entire road was made on the opposite side of the valley. The last change was made about forty years ago by two colored men, Jacob Kernel and Andrew Daughtery of Frost. The state re-graded the road in 1923, making it much wider to accomodate the increased traffic.

Churches. In 1833 Mt. Zion Church in "The Hills" was built. It is a log structure but has been materially repaired and is still used for a house of worship. Previous to the erection of Mt. Vernon Church the people of Upper Knapp Creek attended services at Mt. Zion. Many of them went horseback across the country by way of the Mill Run at I. B. Moore's.

Mt. Vernon Church was erected in 1856. A noticeable feature of this building is the good quality of the lumber used. Scarcely a defective spot can be seen in the ceiling. John McClevee and son did the carpenter work. All the lumber was planed by hand at a shop on the land owned by Moses Moore who was a noted Christian Character.

Trinity M. E. Church at Frost was dedicated in 1888. The opening prayer was offered by Rev. Wm. T. Price of Marlinton. The dedicatory sermon was preached by Rev. Mr. Hiese of Monroe County. Rev. George Spencer was the pastor in charge.

New Hope Lutheran at Minnehaha was built in 1893 through the efforts of Henry White, Sr., and his family who came to Southard's Creek in 1873. Before building the church they had occasional services by Lutheran pastors in their homes, in nearby churches, and in school houses. For some years after the building of the church the congregation was supplied by ministers from the Sugar Grove Charge of Pocahontas County, Virginia. Later it had a pastor of its own, but at the present